



April 2004

# City of Rye News

## City of Rye News

the newsletter of the

Rye City Council



## City Council

Franklin Chu

Robert Cypher

Mathew Fahey

Duncan Hennes

Roz Larr

Howard G. Seitz

## Mayor

Steve Otis

## LOCUST FIRE HOUSE BOND ISSUE VOTE TUESDAY, APRIL 27, 2004

*On Tuesday, April 27, 2004,* City of Rye residents will vote on a proposed \$2.24 million bond issue to repair and rehabilitate the Locust Avenue Firehouse. All voting will take place at City Hall. Polls will be open between 6 AM and 9 PM.

The City Council voted unanimously to support the Firehouse Bond Issue but Rye voters will decide whether or not to approve the bonding proposal. This document presents the frequently asked questions and corresponding answers on the history, condition, and reasons why the City Council is presenting this referendum to the voters.

### ***Q. Why is this rehabilitation project necessary?***

**A.** The Locust Avenue Firehouse was built in 1909. It has served the community well but is now in serious disrepair. The building's original roof leaks in numerous locations and must be replaced. The windows (also original to the building) are beyond repair and currently fail to provide protection from wind, rain, and cold. Brickwork and gutters need to be repaired.

Inside the building water damage appears at a number of locations. The apparatus room floor, built for horse drawn fire fighting equipment, must be replaced to support today's fire trucks. Ceilings, walls, firefighter living and work areas are in poor condition. Bathroom facilities are inadequate with some bathrooms out of service.

their useful life. Plumbing, heating, ventilation, and electrical systems need to be replaced. Due to the ground shifting, the two small additions built in the 1970's now sway away from the firehouse and must be stabilized.

The Locust Avenue Firehouse must be brought up to legally required standards, including those established by the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA), the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and others associated with fire prevention and control.

In 1998, the City commissioned an independent firm to produce a Public Safety Study. That study, published in 1999, recommended rehabilitating the Locust Firehouse at its current location and outlined the required work.

The building's systems are all beyond

*Continued on page 2*

*Continued from page 1*

**Q. What does the rehabilitation plan include?**

**A.** The Fire Department presented two plans to the City Council for their consideration. The City Council chose the "minimum" plan that restores the existing building to current standards and proper repair.

The rehabilitation plan selected by the City Council provides the needed repairs to bring the existing firehouse up to today's government-mandated building and safety codes. The plan repairs the failing infrastructure of the building and replaces the heating, electrical, plumbing, and other systems.

The more extensive plan not selected by the City Council included an expansion of the facility to address the long-term needs of the department, the replacement of the 1970's additions, and a full upgrade of the facility as recommended in the Public Safety Study. While the more extensive plan was recommended by the Fire Department, the City Council opted for the less expensive "minimum" rehabilitation to lessen the burden on today's taxpayers.

**Q. Who designed the rehabilitation plan?**

**A.** The building rehabilitation plan was designed by the Fire Department Building Committee, comprised of professional and volunteer firefighters, with staff support from the City Engineer and outside experts.

**Q. What is the cost of the proposed plan?**

**A.** Voters will be asked to approve \$2.24 million of debt to rehabilitate the Locust Firehouse. These funds will be combined with \$2 million of previously authorized debt to provide the \$4.24 million (based

on 2005 construction costs) needed for the project.

The more expensive plan that was not selected by the City Council had estimated project costs totaling \$5.6 million.

**Q. What is the cost to the average Rye taxpayer?**

**A.** The \$2.24 million in additional borrowing will add approximately \$27 per year to the tax bill of the average assessed home in Rye. This \$27 reflects a 1% increase in your City taxes for 2005. That increase will remain in place for the 20-year term of the bonds. If you are calculating your own tax cost, this percentage increase applies only to the City of Rye portion of your property tax bill. In the City of Rye, your property taxes are comprised of approximately 64% school taxes, 18% Westchester County taxes, and 18% City of Rye taxes.

**Q. What is the financial position of the City to borrow at this time and for this purpose?**

**A.** The City of Rye is in strong financial shape. Moody's Investors Services, the rating agency that evaluates our financial position gives Rye its highest bond rating – a "triple A" (Aaa). Moody's latest rating release notes the City's "favorable debt position and maintenance of a strong financial position" and "a trend of well-maintained financial operations stemming from effective fiscal oversight".

**Q. Can we operate our Fire Department from one location and close the Locust firehouse?**

**A.** The ability of the Fire Department to respond to fire calls throughout the entire community quickly and successfully

*Continued on page 3*

*Continued from page 2*

depends upon where we deploy our fire services. Having two firehouses located in different parts of the City is vital to response time. An independent service rates fire response capabilities and uses geographic distribution and the ability to respond from more than one location as factors in setting our rates. If we closed the Locust Firehouse our rating would be reduced and insurance rates could increase an estimated \$50 per household. More important to note, our level of safety would be reduced.

***Q. Our Fire Department depends upon professional firefighters and volunteers to provide fire service to Rye. Why is the rehabilitation project important to the Fire Department?***

**A.** The City of Rye Fire Department is a "combination department" made up of professional firefighters and local residents serving as volunteers to provide fire service to the community. The rehabilitation of the Locust Avenue Firehouse is important to the professional and volunteer members of the department. Rye has 17 professional firefighters and 100 volunteers providing fire protection.

Combination departments provide fire service at significant savings to local taxpayers. To be successful, the department must recruit and retain volunteers as part of the mix of providing fire service. Properly maintained and equipped firehouses are vital towards attracting volunteers.

Rye's professional firefighters work 24-hour shifts and sleep at their firehouse overnight when on duty. The condition of our firehouses must be up to code and current standards.

firefighters or the two volunteer fire companies based at that facility.

***Q. Why is additional funding needed to complete this project?***

**A.** The original costs for the Firehouse project were estimated in the late 1990's. Cost escalation (estimated at 10% a year) and architect errors in the original cost estimates require additional funding to complete the proposed "minimum plan". The City has hired an outside construction firm to update cost estimates for this project based on construction commencing in 2005.

The City Council has stipulated that every effort should be made to reduce costs, if possible, in the final design. A committee, which will include one or more City Council members, will be formed to monitor project progress and project costs. If savings can be found the City will borrow only what is necessary to complete the project.

***Q. Is borrowing the most appropriate way to fund modernization of capital projects like the Locust Fire House?***

**A.** Financing long-term capital improvements with borrowed dollars is a fair and equitable way to distribute the costs on current and future taxpayers.

***Q. Why does the post card notice of bond referendum refer to borrowing for the re-construction of city-owned buildings rather than specifically mentioning the Locust Avenue building?***

**A.** The City's bond resolution and language on the notice were drafted by the City's outside Bond Counsel to comply with the New York State Law. The funds from the bond will only be used for the Locust Avenue Firehouse Project.

# City of Rye News . . . . .

## Important Numbers

Here are the phone numbers for reaching City information or services. You may want to clip and save these numbers for handy future reference.

Assessor	967-7565
Boat Basin	967-2011
Building	967-7372
City Clerk	967-7371
City Court	967-1599
City Manager	967-7404
Engineering	967-7676
Finance	967-7303
FIRE (business)	967-4530
Golf Club	835-3205
Law	967-7074
Mayor	967-7404
Naturalist	967-5702
Personnel	967-7279
Planning	967-7167
Police (Business)	967-1234
Public Works	967-7464
Recreation	967-2535
RCTV	967-7242
City Hall FAX	967-4604

Email: [manager@ryeny.gov](mailto:manager@ryeny.gov)  
Website: <http://www.ryeny.gov>

Emergency  
Fire • Police • Ambulance  
**911**

*Continued from page 3*

### **Q. Why do we need a bond referendum?**

**A.** Under the City Charter, approval of

this borrowing is a decision of the voters of the City of Rye. It is your decision. The City Council voted unanimously to present this plan for referendum.

**Information on the bond issue will be available through local media, the City's website, and RCTV Channel 75. Members of the City Council, the City Manager, and the Fire Department are available to answer your questions. The Fire Department will hold an Open House at the Locust Avenue firehouse on Saturday, April 24th from 11 AM -2 PM.**

**Voting is on Tuesday, April 27, 2004. All voting will take place at City Hall. Polls will be open between 6 AM and 9 PM.**



## City Hall

Boston Post Road  
Rye, New York 10580

**Locust Avenue Fire House  
REFERENDUM  
April 27th**

Postal Patron  
Rye, New York 10580

PRSRT STD  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
White Plains, NY  
Permit No. 1118